

SALT AND SAVOUR

PERHAPS IT IS a little far-fetched to make analogies between cultivation and culture, but there are good and bad harvests among books just as there are among farmers' crops. Last year, when *Canadian Literature* undertook for the first time the awarding of the University of British Columbia's Medal for Popular Biography, the judges discovered that 1961 had been such a lean year that there seemed no book worthy of an award; none, accordingly, was given. On the other hand, 1962 was a relatively good year for biography in Canada, and the panel of judges, consisting of Arnold Edinborough, S. E. Read and George Woodcock, found that the choice lay between a fair number of books which for various reasons were eminently worth consideration.

Inevitably, there was the usual underbrush of dull lives of worthy citizens and inept memoirs by public figures who would better have remained content with the merits of whatever action their lives contained. But a group of good, competent biographical works remained. They included *McGillivray, Lord of the Northwest* by Marjorie Wilkins Campbell; F. A. McGregor's interesting study of a politician out of office, *The Rise and Fall of Mackenzie King: 1911-1919*; Margaret Wade Labarge's scholarly *Simon de Montfort*; George Whalley's study of one of Canada's incredible wanderers, *The Legend of John Hornby*. All of these were works which contributed something new to their particular fields, and which presented serious research and original conclusions. There was also that delightful maverick among autobiographies, Kildare Dobbs' *Running to Paradise* which, with a rather appropriate whimsicality, the jury for the Governor-General's Awards decided to regard as a work of fiction. All these books have been or will be reviewed in *Canadian Literature*.

EDITORIAL

In the end, the book that seemed most appropriate to the judges for an award, under the definition of "Popular Biography" that accompanies the University of British Columbia's medal, was *The Tiger of Canada West* by W. H. Graham, a Life of William Dunlop, one of the most eccentric but also one of the most important pioneers in the development of Upper Canada. *The Tiger of Canada West* is an accurate, well-researched book, based on contemporary records, and written with the kind of verve that Dunlop himself would have appreciated. It presents a man who is important in relation to his age and country, but also fascinating in his personal oddity; it records the wayward vigour of Dunlop's character, but it also portrays in vivid detail the frontier society in which he flourished; it shows his triumphs with admiration and illuminates with sympathy the tragedy of his last days, lived out in a world whose rapid changes had left no place for men of his kind. Mr. Graham competently reconstructs a personality and its age; more than that, he breathes life into them. His book will be valuable to scholars; it will be eminently readable to those who make no scholarly pretensions.

In accordance with a past custom that has associated the Canadian Authors' Association with the University of British Columbia's Medal, the presentation will take place at the Association's annual meeting this summer.